DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 031 104 FL 001 103

By-Otto, Frank
Individualizing Instruction through Team Teaching.
American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portugese.
Pub Date Sep 68
Note-3p.; Article appeared in the Section "Shop-Talk" conducted by Richard Barrutia
Journal Cit-Hispania; v51 n3 p473-475 Sep 1968
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.25
Descriptors-*Advanced Students, Audiolingual Methods, Audiolingual Skills, Effective Teaching, *Individualized Instruction, *Instructional Improvement, Instructional Innovation, Intonation, *Language Instruction, Listening Comprehension, Modern Languages, Pronunciation, Speech Evaluation, Student Motivation, Teaching Methods, *Team Teaching

Effective individualized instruction and increased student participation in foreign language communication skills could be achieved by a team-teaching approach. A team, comprised of the regular foreign language teacher and a number of volunteer advanced students, could (1) present listening comprehension materials, (2) evaluate pronunciation and intonation, and (3) aid in activating extemporaneous speaking skills. By incorporating the team approach once, or preferably twice, a week into the lesson plan, the foreign language teacher could develop a more varied and creative presentation, more highly motivated students, and an improved teaching program generally. (Author/AF)

ED031104

HISPANIA; v 51 n 3 September 1968 p 473-475

OP-TALK

Conducted by RICHARD BARRUTIA*

NDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION THROUGH TEAM TEACHING

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As foreign language teachers, we often are unwilling to consider team teaching as a satisfactory technique for providing opportunities for more individualized instruction and student participation in the target language. Perhaps we are making fallacious assumptions about the nature of the team teaching process, for, by way of example, it is not necessary that the team consist only of language teachers, nor is it essential to have large-group instruction.

Some of the most effective team teaching may be accomplished by advanced foreign language students who work under the close supervision of the first- and second-year foreign language teacher. Qualified volunteers enable the teacher to structure foreign language learning activities into situations utilizing the concept of small-group instruction. There are numerous ways in which foreign language teachers can work cooperatively with advanced students to individualize instruction and encourage participation on the part of all class members.

Enactment of dialogs

We are aware of the amount of class time necessary for students to enact dialogs. This activity is essential, since it affords our students the experience of assuming roles and interacting in conversational sequences. At the same time, we have an opportunity to evaluate student achievement with respect to pronunciation, intonation, and the retention of dialog materials. However, by preparing an evaluation sheet and reviewing the items of concern with other members of the team, it would be possible for the teachers to provide for more frequent dialog enactment and evaluation. The foreign language class would be divided into groups according to the number of advanced foreign language students participating in team teaching.

When divided into five groups of six students each, a class of thirty students can enact an average-length dialog in ten to fifteen minutes. The major advantages of small-group instruction are that we minimize the amount of passive listening time and allow for more individualized attention to the particular problems of each pupil.

Topics for extemporaneous conversation

One of the most difficult tasks for the foreign language teacher is that of providing a variety of experiences in extemporaneous speaking. Among many problems are those of selecting enough different topics, suggesting useful vocabulary, and correcting morphology and syntax. In most first- or second-year classes of twenty-five to thirty students, extemporaneous speaking is neglected because of the large amount of time required, the lack of sufficient topics and vocabulary, and the tendency to stress other activities which demand the simultaneous participation of all students. Teachers who attempt to provide experiences in extemporaneous speaking without help from other teachers or advanced students usually complain that they are not able to resolve individual problems with pronunciation and syntax. However, students usually acclaim this as a meaningful and much-needed learning experience.

By dividing the class into groups of five or six students, two or three topics would be sufficient for conversation. The title of each topic would be placed on a filing card which might also include six to eight suggested vocabulary words and a few pertinent questions or opinions relating to the topic. Students are encouraged to discuss the topic after each student presents his views to the group.

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This procedure for exposing students to extemporaneous speaking is quite flexible. Team teaching members may ask questions regarding the presentation of each topic or the student may lead a discussion or ask questions accordingly. The primary objective of this activity is to give each student an opportunity to manipulate familiar vocabulary within known grammatical structures. Meaningful reinforcement is necessitated by the variety of the topics chosen by the teacher. Student presentations need not exceed one to two minutes, depending upon the ability and level or the participants.

Incorporating the visual adjunct

Small-group instruction is also very effective when visuals are used to present a situation for dialog review or extemporaneous conversation. Visuals depicting dialog sequences may be displayed for all groups simultaneously or each team-teaching member may show a visual for description by a member of the group. Questions may range in difficulty from *¿Qué es?* or *¿Para qué sirve?* to *¡Describa la fotografía!* or *¿Qué diría el chico . . . ¿Por qué?*, etc.

Assigning a team teaching member to each group results in more individualized attention to audio-lingual skills and gives the team member an opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on conversation sequences. This approach emphasizes the concept of group interaction to produce effective communication—one of the primary goals of modern foreign language teaching.

Listening comprehension

Most teachers admit that they would like to present more activities emphasizing listening comprehension; however, it is not realistic to expect us to select or formulate narratives and dialogs with enough questions on content to challenge every student. This task is facilitated by the team approach.

The teacher can present the story or a team of advanced students can present the dialog. Questions on story content—preferably questions concentrating on the use of a particular structural objective in grammar—can be given by each team member to his small group. The questions would be prepared by the teacher and reviewed with the other members of the team. (A total of ten questions would offer every student a chance to make two responses if there were five students per group.)

It is essential that we supplement dialog and pattern drills by exposing our students to a variety of activities providing listening comprehension. This exposure stresses the practical application of listening and speaking skills. Each student is required to demonstrate his understanding of the material presented by answering questions about story content. In the latter case, he is gaining vital experience in manipulating the morphology and syntax of the target language.

Evaluating pronunciation and intonation

One of the most time-consuming and difficult tasks is that of evaluating student performance in the areas of pronunciation and intonation. Individual students may be tested in small groups when objectives are clearly outlined and reviewed with team members.

AURAL CUES: Each team member is provided with a list of phrases which he reads. Students are asked to repeat the utterance and are evaluated according to the objective defined. The following list is an example which might be used in a first-year course. Blanks are checked, if the team member feels that the student requires more work on a given point.

Student's Name_____

¿Tiene usted un perro?	1. (rr) _____
	2. Int. _____
No, tengo tres gatos.	3. (tr) _____
	4. Int. _____
¿Toman leche los gatos?	5. (o) _____
	6. Int. _____
¡No, señor! Toman café.	7. (ñ) _____
Pues, son animales curiosos.	8. (r) _____
Sí, ¡es verdad!	9. (b) _____

READING SELECTIONS: Reading passages may also be given to the student with the objective of evaluating certain sounds. In the following example, italicized words and syllables would be circled if missed by

the reader. The students' copy would not be marked.

En una clase elemen*tal*,[1] la *profesora*[2] explica a los alumnos[3] la[4] importancia de la leche. Mientras habla, nota que Ricardo[5] y Carlos *no están*[6] escuchando. *Por eso*,[7] le *pregunta*[8] a Carlos si puede nombrar seis cosas que *contienen*[9] leche.

1. elemental _____
2. profesora _____
3. (u) _____
4. aim _____
5. Ricardo _____
6. no están _____
7. poreso _____
8. pregunta _____
9. contienen _____

Benefits of the Team-Teaching Approach

THE TEACHER: The team approach permits the foreign language teacher to offer a variety of classroom learning activities leading to the increased manipulation and acquisition of communication skills. Teachers can be more successful in planning and implementing innovative classroom techniques when they receive assistance in providing individualized instruction and frequent evaluation of audio-lingual proficiency.

THE STUDENTS: We know that students are less inhibited when called upon to react in small-group situations. Active participation is encouraged by frequent exposure to the target language via dialog enactment and adaptation, extemporaneous speaking, and listening comprehension. Greater emphasis is placed upon manipulating audio-lingual skills in the most effective manner possible—through frequent meaningful communication in the target language.

THE TEAM MEMBERS: Volunteer advanced foreign language students testify that their experience as members of a teaching team represents one of the most worthwhile and challenging activities of their course of study. The released time from study halls is not excessive and is easily arranged in most cases. This exposure has motivated many excellent students to pursue careers in teaching modern foreign languages.

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM: There is no doubt that an emphasis on increasing individualized instruction and student participation results in a more challenging and rewarding foreign language program. Students are placed in closer contact with the foreign language, and greater numbers elect to continue their study of a modern foreign language.

A Note to the Profession

This article does not propose that we ask advanced foreign language students to volunteer their services during study halls on a daily basis. This practice would certainly not be in keeping with the policies of most school districts. The intent is to provide for a variety of learning activities which stress individualized instruction and student participation in foreign language communication skills. Such small-group contact is achieved by the team-teaching approach—a team consisting of the regular first- or second-year foreign language teacher and four or five volunteer advanced students. The team approach may be used to model dialogs, present listening comprehension materials, evaluate pronunciation and intonation, and aid in developing extemporaneous speaking skills.

It would be ideal if the team approach could be incorporated once or preferably twice into the weekly lesson plan. In most cases, it would require approximately one to two hours of volunteer student time including planning and reviewing of lesson content. The team might work together for twenty minutes twice per week. The results will be a more varied audio-lingual program, highly motivated students, more creative foreign language teaching, and a constant desire to improve the foreign language instructional program.

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